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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at Kutztown University (Pennsylvania) to examine issues affecting women in higher education. Areas addressed in the study include aspirations for advancement, perceptions of family support, perceived institutional support, perceived barriers to advancement, and networks perceived to support faculty. Data were solicited through a survey from all faculty members (N=340), half of whom responded. Data from the survey provide a profile of male and female faculty and suggest that the university is still operating within a male-dominated organizational structure with a glass ceiling still in place. Results suggest: women must network and form supportive internal structures that include mentoring; a need exists to reexamine current hiring practices at the university; greater institutional support is needed for faculty; the most attractive support is found to be in professional development monies awarded for research and professional opportunities; and the main sources of inequity seem to be in the ratio of male to female faculty, with a subsequent imbalance in gender between faculty and students. This study has implications for the recruitment and retention of women in higher education, and encourages women seeking mid- and top-level administrative positions. The survey form and 23 references are included. (LL)

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Perceptions of Institutional Climate

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ABSTRACT

This study, conducted at Kutztown State University of Pennsylvania, queried 400 faculty regarding educational and career aspirations, obstacles perceived to exist in realizing their aspirations as well as networks perceived to support faculty in realizing their aspirations.

This study utilizes data from a questionnaire developed by the researchers based upon previous research in the area and upon expert opinion. The questionnaire was administered to adjunct, temporary, tenure-track and tenured faculty at Kutztown State University. Data from the survey provides a profile of female and female faculty including age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, department/college, number of years at the institution and career goals and aspirations.

Previous research in the area of aspirations has focused primarily upon secondary and college aged school students and upon factors contributing to educational aspirations. This study holds implications for the recruitment, retention of women in higher education and for the development of support networks in encouraging women to seek mid-level and top-level administrative positions. Farther reaching implications can be made regarding the education of all students at all grade levels in achieving educational equity.

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Perceptions of Institutional Climate

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Introduction

The issues affecting women in higher education have only begun receiving attention, as greater numbers of women have moved into the ranks of academia. It is only within the past 3-5 years that the concept of a "glass ceiling" has been identified in connection with women and minorities (Clarke, 1988; Dozier, 1988; Grunig, 1987; Tillett, 1987), the glass ceiling being defined as those positions of power and authority that can be seen but never achieved.

Consequently, much of the literature dealing with women, upward mobility, career goals, aspirations, and barriers has focused on young girls and women entering the college/university setting (McBain 1986; Kenkel, 1983; Sandburg, 1987). Most studies found that girls and boys do not differ in their levels of aspirations and set equally high goals at the middle school and high school levels (Sandburg, 1987), however, as students enter college, a disparity begins to appear. Several studies indicate that women begin to experience more conflict in their roles in career and family, while men seem to remain relatively free from conflict (McBain and Woolsey, 1986). These conflicts are not exclusive to the mainstream culture, but rather appear to cross cultural lines.

Black and Hispanic women indicate a desire to successfully combine career, marriage and family as a primary goal, while their male counterparts report a desire to attain career goals as a primary goal, with family and marriage as secondary goals (Bronzaft, 1991).

Do women and men differ in their perceptions of the existence of a glass ceiling? Do women and men perceive similar obstacles and support their efforts toward advancement? Do women and men aspire to the same levels of advancement? These are the questions posed by the researchers at Kutztown University.

As women enter the higher education faculty ranks in greater numbers, the dilemma they face between personal and professional lives has received increasing attention. Recent research on the topics of promotion, rank tenure and the "glass ceiling" has indicated a need to investigate these issues more closely. The primary purpose of this study, therefore, was to determine perceived support and perceived obstacles to career advancement among faculty at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. Areas addressed in the study included aspirations for advancement, perceptions of family support, perceived institutional support and perceived barriers to advancement. The study involved collection of data, via survey, from all faculty (adjunct, temporary, tenure-tract, and tenured). Fifty percent (170) of 340 surveys were returned. Responses to the survey provided the basis for this paper.

Demographic Data

A total of 170 surveys were returned, reflecting 60% of total female faculty and 40% of total male faculty at Kutztown University. Kutztown University has approximately 8300 graduate and undergraduate students. There are currently 347 Tenure tract faculty positions: 66% of female faculty are currently tenured and 81% of male faculty are tenured. Of faculty at the associate level, 27% are female, 36% are male. Of assistant professors, 52% are female, while 24% are male. These numbers at Kutztown University reflect national figures. The 1986 PEER Report Card reports that figures for faculty rank of female and male professors are directly inverse (Academe, 1986). Male faculty can be portrayed as a mushroom, with full professors at the top and assistants at the bottom. Female faculty may be portrayed as a pyramid with the wide base reflecting the assistant level and full professors at the top.

Aspirations

Of the female faculty surveyed, 88% indicated a desire to advance in rank, tenure or position in their fields. Positions included department chair, dean and coordinator/director. Seventy-one (71%) of the male faculty expressed a desire to advance in rank, tenure and position. Both female and male faculty indicated similar desire to become a college/university vice president. A slight difference in desire to become a college/university president was found: with women making up the smaller percentage (10% male, 17% female). Those aspiring to become a college/university president comprised only 17% of the total sample. Additionally, twenty-six percent of female and male faculty reflected a strong desire to explore a career unrelated to academics.

Perceived Obstacles

Career-related responsibilities, such as teaching load, committee work and advisement were consistently perceived as the primary obstacles for advancement for all respondents. With regard to personal obstacles, 45% of female faculty perceived barriers versus 28% of male faculty. Women most often cited family responsibilities in achieving their goals. Men indicated time and financial constraints as the main obstacles for advancement. These results are also reflective of national trends.

Perceived Support

Female respondents perceived less institutional support than their male counterparts (41% v. 51%). Funds provided for professional development were cited as the major source of institutional support. Sixty-seven percent of total faculty cited colleagues as a supportive factor. Females also indicated family/spousal support, but to a lesser degree than males.

The greatest differences in perceptions occurred in response to administrative opportunities and gender. Only 3% of females felt that women received greater opportunity for administrative advancement. Males, on the other hand, perceived no differences in administrative opportunities with regard to gender. Women, by a

four to one margin, felt that men held an advantage in receiving departmental opportunities. Conversely, men perceived that women held a slight edge in achieving the same opportunities.

Comments gleaned from the survey indicated both females and males perceived that high-profile, high-risk positions were held by men; women maintained support and service positions. In general, men felt they had historically had more opportunities for advancement; however, that advantage had been neutralized by Affirmative Action. Men further felt that women were now more likely to have a greater advantage, with a expression of caution to guard against reverse discrimination. Some males admitted the existence of gender discrimination on other campuses, but not at Kutztown University.

Conclusions

1. Kutztown University, like many other universities, is still operating within a male-dominant organizational structure.
2. There does appear to be a glass ceiling in place at the university. Males were more attracted to top level administrative positions at the institution and received them more frequently than women.
3. Males perceived much more institutional support and far fewer personal obstacles than women in achieving their goals. Women frequently viewed themselves as captives of family situations and felt that career goals were constrained by their family situations.
4. Men indicated that the opportunity to achieve within one's academic department was equal for both women and men. Women felt overwhelmingly (by a 4 to 1 margin) that men held the advantage here as well.
5. Although most respondents (84%) indicated the desire to advance in their fields, 26% indicated an interest in exploring a career unrelated to academics. This finding warrants additional research/investigation.
6. Men perceived a sexist cultural defining of careers at Kutztown University, but also indicated that Affirmative Action was "taking care" of women to the point where women are now getting jobs over men.
7. Many men perceived themselves as fairly enlightened and open-minded regarding the female faculty situation at Kutztown University. They allowed that women are resisted in many careers as well as in general advancement, but personally they supported men and women equally. Women felt that there is a "Good Old Boy" network in place that precludes gender equity.

Implications

1. Results of this study indicate that women must network and form supportive internal structure(s) at Kutztown University. A formal mentoring system currently in place at the Miami University of Ohio provides women with the opportunity for orientation to the university community. This type of structure facilitates the move to higher education via a female support coalition.
2. There is a need to reexamine existing hiring practices at Kutztown University. Sixty percent of the student body are women, as are 33% of the tenure track staff. Comparison of these figures

presents a clear imbalance in female student-female staff numbers. Research has shown that the composition of top management sets the example for the entire organization. Kutztown's hiring practices must be reexamined and modified from the top down to reflect the gender and cultural diversity of society.

3. Greater institutional support is needed for faculty. Heavy teaching loads allow little time for research. Financial cutbacks are being felt everywhere. Many faculty are over-committeed. The worker bees are worked too hard. Frequently these are women. Advisement loads are very heavy. These factors create morale problems and need to be addressed.

4. The results of this study showed the most attractive institutional support to be the professional development monies awarded for research and professional opportunities. It would follow that the practice of awarding professional development funds should be continued and expanded.

5. Kutztown University's main sources of inequity seem to be in the ratio of male to female faculty numbers, with a subsequent imbalance in gender between faculty and students. There are also limited opportunities for administrative advancement for women, and a lack of awareness by males regarding the difficulties unique to female colleagues. Possible solutions include the establishment of a formal mentoring system that would foster internal collaboration among women. This type of program could eventually be extended to include cross-gender networking. Recognition and acceptance of women's leadership and working styles can only enrich the university community.

ACADEMIC GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to determine the goals and aspirations of faculty, as well as perceived obstacles and support systems at the university level. All information will be held in strict confidence. All results will be shared in summary only. No analysis will be undertaken using the following personal information if that could be used to identify an individual. Further, no codes have been used to identify individual questionnaires. We appreciate your assistance in providing the information requested.

GENDER: Female____ Male____

AGE: 20-30____ 31-40____ 41-50____ 50+____

RANK: Adjunct____ Instructor____ Assistant____

Associate____ Professor____

STATUS: Temporary____ Tenure-Track____ Tenured____

ETHNICITY: Asian____ Pacific Islander____ White____

American Indian/Alaskan____ Black____

Hispanic____ Indian____

HIGHEST DEGREE ATTAINED: Bachelor's____ Master's____

Doctorate____

DEPARTMENT:_____

YEARS AT KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY: 1-5____ 6-10____

11-15____ 15-20____

20+____

1. I would like to advance in my field (rank, degree, tenure)

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. At some time in the future, I would like to serve as department chair.

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. A Dean's position is appealing to me.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. A Vice-Presidency at the university level is attractive to me.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. A Director's or Coordinator's position would be one that I would enjoy.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I would like to be a University President.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I would like to leave this field and try another academic field.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I would like to try a career unrelated to academics.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. Do you perceive institutional obstacles in achieving your goals?

Yes____ No____

Please specify_____

_____

10. Do you perceive institutional support in achieving your goals?

Yes____ No____

Please specify_____

_____

11. Do you perceive personal obstacles in achieving your goals?

Yes____ No____

Please specify_____

_____

12. Do you perceive personal support in achieving your goals?

Yes____ No____

Please specify_____

_____

13. Do you perceive that men achieve administrative opportunities more easily than women?

Yes____ No____

14. Do you perceive that men receive departmental opportunities more easily than women?

Yes____ No____

15. Do you perceive that some areas/careers are relegated exclusively to men?

Yes____ No____

Please specify_____

_____

16. Do you perceive that some areas/careers are relegated to women?

Yes____ No____

Please specify_____

_____

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